

CONDITION OF RURAL ARTISANS

IN

U. P.

(A Study of Two Selected Villages in Kumaon Hills)

G. S. MEHTA

GIRI INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

B-42, NIRALA NAGAR, LUCKNOW 226007

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CONDITIONS OF RURAL ARTISANS IN U.P. : A STUDY OF
TWO SELECTED VILLAGES OF KUMAUN HILLS

G.S. Mehta*

In India, agriculture has been the main source of livelihood and dependancy for the larger part of population for generations. However, even a relatively rapid growth of agriculture is unlikely to employ the entire rural workforce at reasonable levels of productivity and income. The pressure of population on land is already high and increasing thus resulting in larger surplus of workforce in rural areas. Therefore, development of non-agricultural activities in the rural areas is quite essential for providing employment opportunities and generating substantial incomes for their livelihood. This is particularly necessary for that group of population which have very small land holdings as well as for rural population in general in the wake of rapidly increasing pressure of population on land.

In this context the rural industries and artisan activities offer significant employment potentials at a relatively lower per unit of investment. Moreover technology

*Giri Institute of Development Studies, B-42, Niralanagar, Lucknow - 7.

involved is by and large labour intensive. The activities are quick maturing and adopt traditional techniques of production. At the same time these activities generally yield a higher level of per worker income than agriculture and have wide relationship and dependancy phenomena with the agricultural sector.

Since past, rural artisan activities have been a suitable source for supplementing incomes of rural households in India. The people have been adopting the activities either as a primary source of their household income or keeping them as a subsidiary source alongwith agricultural activities. The activities are under operation on a household basis, employing mostly family labour and occasionally employing hired labourers as well. The main raw material for producing goods are mostly available locally within the rural areas and any shortfall can be met from the nearby markets. The goods produced are being used locally, primarily in agricultural production while the surplus, if any, is sold outside the village. Some of the products which are not utilised in agricultural activities also find their way in the local or outside market.

These activities were quite popular in the rural areas and a majority of households were engaged in them as far back as the Seventeenth Century. However, with the British came the machine made goods which offered indigeneous products

a very stiff competition and since machine made goods were cheaper as well, the rural industries received a major set back. The modern industrial units required raw material in bulk and could offer a higher price for them than what the rural artisan was offering. This added to the plight and misery of the rural artisans. The rural industries, therefore, started dwindling at a rapid pace and the artisans were forced to migrate to the urban centres to seek work.

Even in the face of such adversities some rural activities continued since they were not only the means of rural employment but also of income. Of course, the scale of operation was reduced. However, after independence the Government has taken special interest to safeguard these rural activities and today greater stress is being laid to promote them further. As a result, these activities are again being taken up on a larger scale either to supplement the otherwise low levels of income from agriculture or as a full fledged source of income.

The purpose of the present paper is to study the various non-agricultural household activities in the hill areas and show their importance for the rural economy by way of employment and income generation and to highlight the various problems faced by them in their development. For examining the above aspects the study measures the condition of household's manufacturing and repairing activities in the rural

and urban areas of the district Almora and Uttar Pradesh by way of employment characteristics in various Census years. In the second instance, a micro level study of the existing rural artisan activities in two villages namely Farsali Palli and Jarti, have been studied to identify their condition and importance in the hill district of Almora.

There are eight districts in the hill region of Uttar Pradesh and district Almora is one of them. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people living in the area, and are mostly dependent on agricultural activities for their livelihood which by itself is not capable of catering to their minimum demands (requirements) due to the less returns from the sector. In particular, the land terrain and its topography, agriculture becomes a much costlier occupation. Since dependency on agriculture is increasing and land holdings are getting fragmented it becomes difficult to cultivate efficiently. Moreover, technology used for cultivation is outdated and is continuing for past several generations such that the lands are not being ploughed properly. Only the top soil is ploughed over and over whereas the soil slightly lower down is left untouched. Moreover the public utilities like minor irrigation, availability of better seeds, fertilizers and pesticides are not being made available to the cultivators in sufficient quantities. It is not very easy to extend irrigation facilities in the hills due to the nature of the terrain so that these areas have to depend mainly on the monsoons for water.

In the case of good quality seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides we find that they are not being used in adequate quantities for the simple reason that the village folk do not have sufficient resources to procure them on the one hand and, on the other, the inaccessibility to some of the villages makes distribution difficult. As a result of these difficulties agricultural output of the hills is rather low.

The village household's manufacturing and repairing activities (household industries) therefore, play a very significant role in the village economy where agriculture, although the predominant activity, is incapable of meeting the income demands of the households fully. Through these industries the household incomes are raised so as to improve the living conditions of the villagers. Even otherwise agricultural operations do not call for full employment all the year round and the spare time is productively utilised in various household type industrial activities for good purpose. However, we find that the household industries are also being carried out below an optimum scale for the simple reason that villagers do not have sufficient purchasing power on the one hand and the industrial activities are not always able to find a market for their goods outside the village on the other. The second important reason for inadequate development of these activities has been the fact that the activities has had to face a very stiff competition from producers of similar goods outside the village.

Analysing the employment data of various Census years, it seems that a very small percentage of workforce is engaged in the household industries either in the district Almora or the State as a whole. Although the workforce in these activities has increased in 1981 over the period 1971 whereas the activities has received serious set back in 1971 when the employment rate decreased as compared to 1961 both at the State level and the district level. In the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh the employment percentage in the household

Table 1

Percentage Distribution of Workers Engaged in Household Manufacturing and Repairing Industries to Total Workers in Different years

District/ State	1961			1971			1981		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Almora	1.75	0.07	1.82	1.02	0.10	1.22	1.99	0.30	2.29
Uttar Pradesh	5.26	0.99	6.25	2.71	0.95	3.66	2.59	1.81	4.40

Source : Percentages are calculated from the Census of Corresponding Years.

industries has decreased continuously during all Census years. In the urban areas however, it decreased from 0.99 per cent in 1961 to 0.95 percent in 1971. In 1981 the employment percentage went up to 1.81 percent. On the other hand, the employment percentage in the rural areas of district

Almora had decreased from 1.75 per cent to 1.02 per cent in 1971 as compared to 1961. But by 1981 the percentage had increased to 1.99 which was even higher than the corresponding figure for 1961. Examining the employment percentages, it seems that the household industries are important in rural areas of district Almora. In Uttar Pradesh the employment ratio in the industries has increased significantly at faster rate even after registering a decrease in 1961.

Distributing the household industrial workforce among rural and urban segments in different census years (Table 2) we find the workers participation is consistently decreasing in rural areas and increasing in urban areas both at district and State level in each Census Year. However, the concentration of workers in the industries continues to be significantly higher in rural areas as compared to urban areas in both the district and State. However, by 1981 the household workers of the urban areas have almost caught up with those workers of the rural areas. Thus examining this evidence, one can conclude that the importance of household's industries in the rural areas is continuously decreasing and that the household industries of urban areas are coming up fast particularly in the State as a whole. This could be due to the fact that in urban areas the households industries are intensively availing the waste raw materials and by-products from organised large scale industries whereas the rural households have no such opportunity and moreover available raw material in the rural areas is being diverted to urban large industries.

Table 2

Percentage Distribution of Workers Engaged in the Household Industry in Rural and Urban Areas in Different Census Years

Distt./ State	1961			1971			1981		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Almora	96.05	3.95	100.00	91.32	8.68	100.00	87.04	12.96	100.00
Uttar Pradesh	84.16	15.84	100.00	73.97	26.03	100.00	58.88	42.12	100.00

Source : Percentages are calculated from the Census of Corresponding years.

After emphasising the importance and conditions of the households industries at the State and district level we turned out to highlight the same proposition at the two villages (as indicated earlier) of the district Almora. For this purpose we have covered some rural artisan activities existing in the villages. The major activities covered by this study are : spinning and weaving of woolen yarn, carpentry, black smithy, tailoring and oil processing.

There are 143 households in village Jarti, out of which 73 households (51.05%) are engaged in various non-agricultural manufacturing activities, either on a full time or part time basis. In the village Farsali Palli, there are 84 households in all, out of them 40 households (47.61%) are involved in non-agricultural work. Out of the 73 artisan households of

Jarti two households are fully dependent on non-agricultural activity and have no other source of income and 18 households have non-agricultural work as their primary source of income. The remaining 53 households have artisan activity as a secondary source of income. In Farsali Palli, out of a total of 40 artisan households, 12 households have artisan activity as their primary source of income while 19 households works as artisans on a part time basis having agriculture as their primary activity. The remaining 9 households are fully dependent on the artisan activity for their source of livelihood and have no secondary source of income.

Table 3

Classification of Village Households that are Engaged as Artisans

Village	Artisan activity as the only source of income	Artisan activity as primary source of income	Artisan activity as the secondary source of income	Total
Jarti	2	18	53	73
Farsali Palli	9	12	19	40
Total	11	30	72	113

Thus we can see that artisan activity is of considerable significance since around 50 percent of the village households are engaged in them. Majority of these households have rather low agricultural holdings and as a result it

becomes essential to supplement the low agricultural incomes by other sources. The artisan households of Jarti have 27.71 per cent of the total cultivable land holdings while in Farsali Palli the percentage is only 16.51. In Jarti 13.71 per cent of the total income of the village (including remittances from outside) is accounted for by the village artisans while in Farsali Palli the percentage is 22.30.

In both Jarti and Farsali Palli Spinning and Weaving is the predominant activity accounting for 69.03 per cent of the artisan activity of the two villages taken together. In Jarti and the Farsali Palli the percentage is 61.64 and 82.50 respectively.

Table 4

Classification of Village Artisan Households
By Type of Activity

Village	Activity					Total
	Spinn- ing & Weaving	Carpen- tary	Black- smithy	Tailor- ing	Oil- proce- ssing	
Jarti	45 (61.64)	12 (16.44)	10 (13.70)	3 (4.11)	3 (4.11)	73 (100.00)
Farsali Palli	33 (82.50)	1 (2.50)	3 (7.50)	3 (7.50)	-	40 (100.00)
Total	78 (69.03)	13 (11.50)	13 (11.50)	6 (5.31)	3 (2.65)	113 (100.00)

Carpentry and black-smithy accounts for around 16 and 14 percentage of artisan activity in Jarti while Tailoring

and Oil-processing accounts for around 4 per cent each. In Farsali Palli all other activities are less important as compared to Spinning and Weaving which alone accounts for 82.50 per cent of the artisan activity of the village. Carpentry accounts for 2.5 per cent while black-smithy and Tailoring each accounts for 7.5 per cent of the artisan activity.

From the point of view of employment generation we find that Spinning as can be expected, engages the highest number of persons ⁱⁿ in Jarti as well as Farsali Palli, accounting for around 23 and 37 per cent employment respectively. The second most important activity is black-smithy in Jarti with nearly 30 per cent employment and weaving in Farsali with nearly 35 per cent employment. The other activities are less significant from the point of view employment generation. The artisan employment to total village employment is around 41 per cent in both Jarti and Farsali Palli.

While employment in Jarti is confined to mainly Spinning and Black-smithy, maximum income is generated in Weaving which accounts for around 38 per cent of the artisan income. Carpentry is the second most important activity accounting for nearly 23 per cent income. In Farsali Palli, however, Weaving is the single most important source of artisan income. Spinning which accounts for over 51 per cent of employment contributes 13 per cent of the village artisan income. The artisans incomes for 13.71 per cent in Jarti and 22.30 per cent in Farsali Palli.

Table 5

Classification of Employment in Different Activity

Vill- age	Activity							Total
	Weaving	Weaving & Spinning	Spinning	Carpen- tary	Black- smithy	Tailor- ing	Oil- Mills	
Jarti	18 (4.90)	-	66 (17.98)	12 (3.27)	45 (12.26)	4 (1.09)	6 (1.63)	151 (41.13)
Farsali Palli	24 (11.17)	7 (5.09)	46 (21.30)	4 (1.85)	3 (1.39)	5 (2.31)	-	89 (41.20)
TOTAL	42	7	112	16	48	9	6	240

Note : Figures in parentheses are percentages to total village employment in all sectors.

Table 6

Classification of Artisan Households, Employment and Income

Acti- vity	Jarti			Farsali Palli			Total		
	No. of H.H.	Em- ploy- ment	In- come (Rs.) per yr.	No. of H.H.	Em- ploy- ment	Income (Rs.) per yr.	No. of H.H.	Em- ploy- ment	Income (Rs.) per yr.
Spinn- ing	27	66	6490 (43.71)(12.18)	16	46	7605 (51.69)(13.44)	46	112	14095 (46.67)(12.83)
Weaving	18	18	20400 (11.92)(38.28)	15	31	40950 (34.83)(72.38)	33	49	61350 (20.42)(55.84)
Carpen- try	12	12	12100 (7.95)(22.71)	1	4	1150 (4.49)(2.03)	13	16	13250 (6.67)()
Black- smithy	10	45	8050 (29.80)(15.11)	3	3	3676 (3.37)(6.50)	13	48	11725 (20.00)()
Tailoring	3	4	3150 (2.65)(5.91)	3	5	3200 (5.62)(5.66)	6	9	6350 (3.75)()
Oil Mills	3	6	3100 (3.97)(5.82)	-	-	-	3	6	3100 (2.50)()
Total	73	151	53290 (100.00)(100.00)	40	89	56580 (100.00)(100.00)	113	240	109870 (100.00)(100.00)

Note : Figures in parentheses are percentages to totals.

Table 7

Distribution of Artisan Households in 1965 and 1981

Activity	Village Jarti		Village Farsali Palli		Total	
	1965	1981	1965	1981	1965	1981
Spinning and Weaving	48 (65.75)	45 (61.64)	50 (83.33)	33 (82.50)	98 (73.68)	78 (69.03)
Carpentry	4 (5.48)	12 (16.44)	4 (6.67)	1 (2.50)	8 (6.02)	13 (11.50)
Black-smithy	16 (21.92)	10 (13.70)	5 (9.33)	3 (7.50)	21 (15.79)	13 (11.50)
Tailoring	-	3 (4.11)	1 (1.67)	3 (7.50)	1 (0.75)	6 (5.32)
Oil-Processing	5 (6.85)	3 (4.11)	-	-	5 (3.76)	3 (2.65)
TOTAL	73 (100.00)	73 (100.00)	60 (100.00)	40 (100.00)	133 (100.00)	113 (100.00)

Note : Bracketed are percentages to totals.

We shall now look at the activities individually:

Spinning and Weaving

As has been pointed out, this is the most important activity in the villages of Jarti and Farsali Palli, where households are found engaged in it either on a full-time or part-time basis for supplementing their incomes. Earlier, when our relationship with Tibet was more cordial an even higher percentage of the village population was engaged in Spinning and Weaving since good quality woollen yarn was easily available from Tibet at lower prices. With the ban on avai-

lability of Tibetan wool the village requirement of woollen yarn is not being met. Moreover, the yarn now available is neither of the same quality nor available at reasonable rates. As a result this activity has suffered a set-back. A high percentage of weavers and the landless have since migrated to other areas in search of other more remunerative jobs. In village Jarti during 1965, 65.75 per cent of households and in Farsali Palli, 83.33 per cent households were engaged in the weaving and spinning activities. Now only 58.44 per cent households in Jarti and 82.50 per cent of households in Village Farsali Palli are working on the same activity. There have been an overall 20.41 per cent decrease of households' participation in this activity during this 15 years duration (see table 5) as from 98 households in 1965 only 78 households in 1981 are engaged in spinning and weaving in the two villages.

The present condition therefore is that most of the weavers today are working on a contract basis processing the wool for others at prevalent rates of processing. For this work the wages earned are rather low. Most of the processing is done for Shri Gandhi Ashram and Khadi Gramodyog Board, where the average rates of spinning are Rs.16 per kilogram and the average rate of weaving works out to be Rs.1.75 per meter. The Gandhi Ashram and Khadi Gramodyog Board is the only source through which the artisans get wool for spinning and weaving. That too is given to only those artisans who

are highly skilled. There is a ban on spinning and weaving activity besides that sponsored by the Gandhi Ashram and Khadi Board. As a result the artisans are working well below their full efficiency and subsequently are unable to earn as much as they could have had they access to wool. So far no provision has been made to increase the supply of wool to these artisans from sources besides these two existing sources.

Oil-Processing

Oil processing has been predominantly undertaken by the scheduled caste population on community work system for past long generations. Technology used in the processing is very old which is as has been passed on from one generation to the other. The use have (self) made wooden tools and implements in the production process. Such technology requires much time and needs hard work. Most of the artisans engaged in the activity are landless or they have very small piece of land and oil processing is their main activity. Before the establishment of marketing centre near to the respective villages, they were generating a sufficient amount of income in the villages and were enjoying a much higher level of living. Due to development of market and after the availability of the produce of the oil mills in the market the artisans oil processing activities has received severe set back. Now the people living in the villages are either purchasing the oil products from the near market or processing

the oil-seeds in these mechanised oil mills at lower costs than what the rural artisans have been charging.

Fifteen years ago, there were five oil processing artisan households in both the villages while only three such households are currently engaged in the activity. Due to the greater expansion and development of markets near to the village of Farsali Palli, no oil processing activity is found in operation while there are six households engaged in the village Jarti and are generating Rs.516.67 per head for their household.

Black-Smithy

The black-smiths of both the villages are manufacturing small agricultural implements and parts for the farming households of the village on community work system. Traditionally the activity is adopted by scheduled caste community households as regular arrangement of work with the farmers. The black-smiths mostly use their self made equipments for production process. The process the big iron sheets with the help of small equipments which requires reasonably much hard work. The products of these artisans are not of as good a quality as is available in the market (those are produced with modern technique in large industries). Due to the inferiority of the artisan's products the farmers demands for outside products. Now the activity in the villages is being less important and a significant numbers of artisans have left

the activity. In the village Jarti 37.50 per cent and in the village Farsali Palli 40.00 per cent of artisans have closed the activity during the period 1965 to 1981. Beside of this, there is not any black smith artisan who is independently dependent on this activity. Currently there are 13 artisan households those are employing 48 per cent workforce of the all artisan activities and each worker is generating Rs.244.27 per annum.

Tailoring

Artisans engaged in the Tailoring activity are dominating the activity on the basis of social system work as well as they render their services for exchange in the market. The activity is carried out by people belonging to various castes including scheduled caste. The demand for their services is based on the income elasticity of people on the one hand and on the size of population on the other. We therefore observe that over the years the income levels have gone up and so has the population increased as so the tailors of the two villages have made steady and satisfactory progress and there has been an increase in the number of households engaged in this activity. Thus significantly a higher numbers of artisans have been found in this activity in relation to other existing artisan activities in the villages in 1981 over the period 1965. The proportion in the village has increased about hundred percent and three-folds in the village

Farsali Palli. Currently, there are 3 artisan households in each villages and employing 5.62 per cent workforce, generating 5.66 percent income of the total incomes of all artisan activities.

Carpentary

Previously carpentary work was also carried out by black-smith households alongwith their traditional occupation. Due to the harrassment of other artisan activities in the villages and the increasing numbers of disguised unemployment in agricultural sector, a majority of households have turned to this activity on a full time basis. Artisans engaged in the activity has been producing the implements used in the agricultural sector as well as in the building and construction work. In the village Jarti the activity is still quite popular and higher numbers of population is engaged in this activity and generating the sufficient amount of incomes while in the village Farsali Palli the majority of artisans have left the activity. Currently, there are twelve artisan households engaged in the village Jarti and a single household in the village Farsali Palli, employing twelve and four family workforce in the respective villages and per worker is generating Rs.828.13 in a year. In the village Jarti the activity has been adopted by majority of population, because the raw material is available in sufficient quantity and artisans are the only source for processing the available raw

materials. In the village Farsali Palli a declining trend is noticed in this activity because of less availability of raw material in the village and whatever material is available is being diverted to the large processing machines in the nearby market.

Conclusion

In areas like Almora, although there is heavy reliance of the rural masses on agriculture yet agriculture is not in a position to sustain the population. Consequently the significance of artisan activities and rural household gains important as these activities go a long way in easing the burden on agriculture and in supplementing the low levels of income from the primary sector. However, the condition of rural non-agricultural activities such as rural household industries are far from satisfactory. The employment in the activities has been decreasing continuously over the years in rural areas while the concentration of household industries is noticed in urban areas on the State wide basis. The concentration of households industries had been in rural areas and a significant proportion of workforce was engaged in these activities but the policy of rapid industrialisation have benefited the urban population in opening the various activities. No doubt, still there is higher participation of workforce in the household industries in rural areas as compared to urban areas but the proportion is decreasing at greater rate in rural areas.

Examining the existing situation of artisan activities at a micro level in the village Jarti and Farsali Palli, it is noticed that the importance of a number of activities has considerably decreased in both the villages. This is primarily due to non-availability of raw material in required quantity, secondly, the artisan have been using their traditional outdated technologies in production process and the products are comparatively inferior than those produced in large industries. Thus the market competition is pushing back the artisan products. Thirdly, due to the availability of similar type of products of better quality in the market, the villagers are demanding market goods rather than artisans products.